



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®

Ke Kulanui o Hawai'i

Wendy F. Hensel
President

DEPT. COMM. NO. 221

December 30, 2025

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi,
President and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura, Speaker
and Members of the House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, the University of Hawai'i is transmitting one copy of the Annual Report on the Mauna Kea Lands (Section 304A-1905, Hawai'i Revised Statutes) as requested by the Legislature.

In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, this report may be viewed electronically at: https://www.hawaii.edu/govrel/docs/reports/2026/hrs304a-1905_2026_maunakea-lands_annual-report_508.pdf.

Should you have any questions about this report, please do not hesitate to contact Stephanie Kim at (808) 956-4250, or via e-mail at scskim@hawaii.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wendy F. Hensel'.

Wendy F. Hensel
President

Enclosure

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UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I SYSTEM ANNUAL REPORT



REPORT TO THE 2026 LEGISLATURE

Annual Report on the Mauna Kea Lands

HRS 304A-1905

December 2025

REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
STATE OF HAWAII
2026 REGULAR SESSION

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE MAUNA KEA LANDS

Pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) § 304A-1905, "Mauna Kea Lands; reporting requirements," the University of Hawai'i (UH) respectfully submits its report on (1) Maunakea lands activities; (2) current and pending lease agreements and fees; (3) the status of current and pending administrative rules; (4) income and expenditures of the Mauna Kea lands management special fund established in HRS § 304A-2170; and (5) other issues that may impact the activities on the Mauna Kea lands. Consistent with past practice, this report covers the fiscal year 2024 (FY24), which started on July 1, 2023, and ended on June 30, 2024, but may also include matters and data outside FY24 where relevant.

I. Current and Pending Lease Agreements and Fees

In 1964, the Hawai'i State Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 16 (SCR 16) stating that the "State of Hawaii and its citizenry are most desirous and willing to co-operate and aid in the promotion of our nation's space program and research to the benefit of the County of Hawaii, the state and the nation." It was resolved that the governor set aside and establish an appropriate area on the summit of Maunakea for the installation and operation of a telescope observatory and astronomical activities. In fulfillment of SCR 16, the Mauna Kea Science Reserve (MKSR) was established in 1968, and the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) and UH entered into an agency-to-agency lease granting UH a lease of the Science Reserve for a term expiring on December 31, 2033 (MKSR General Lease). The lease is gratis, a common practice for government agency leases and one that supports the goal of benefiting the County of Hawai'i, the State, and the Nation.

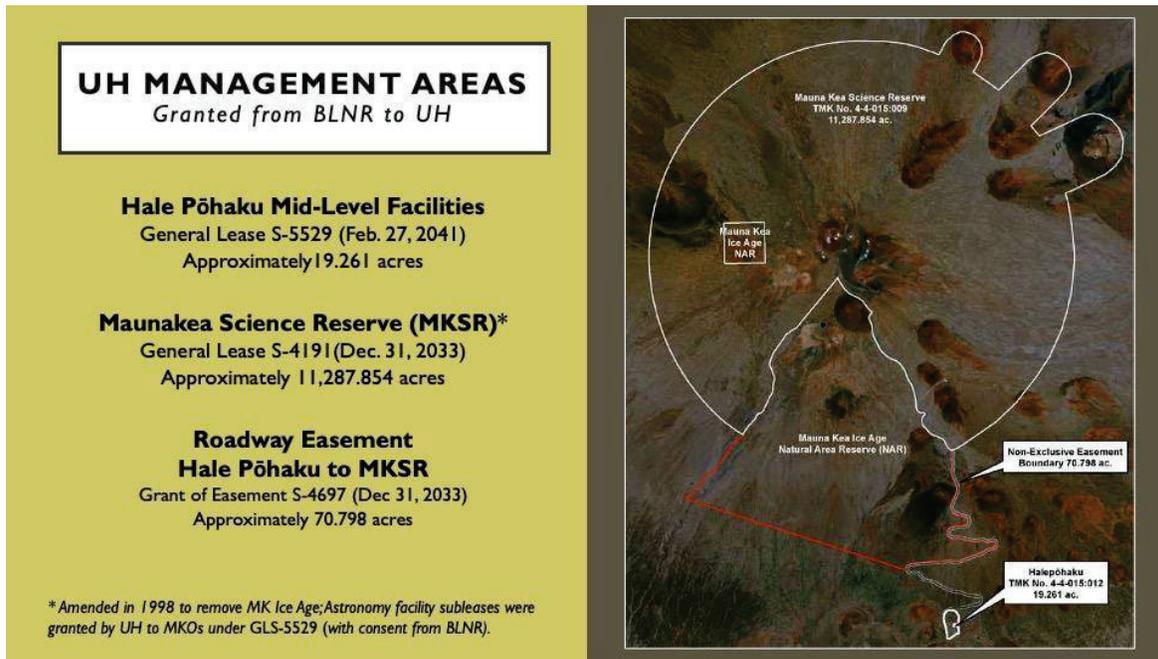


Figure 1. UH-Managed Lands

In a State-supported effort to establish astronomy as a viable research endeavor and establish Hawai'i as a center for astronomical research, UH entered subleases with 11 organizations to operate astronomical observatories. BLNR approved all subleases, which are co-terminus with the MKSR General Lease. Each sublessee is obligated to provide UH with a guaranteed percentage of viewing time. Viewing time provides invaluable opportunities to advance UH, Hawai'i's only State-funded institution of higher education, as a center of excellence in research, including astronomy. Sublessees also agreed to pay for the costs of research support operations provided by UH, contributed to an infrastructure fund, and, in some cases, paid for the construction of support facilities.

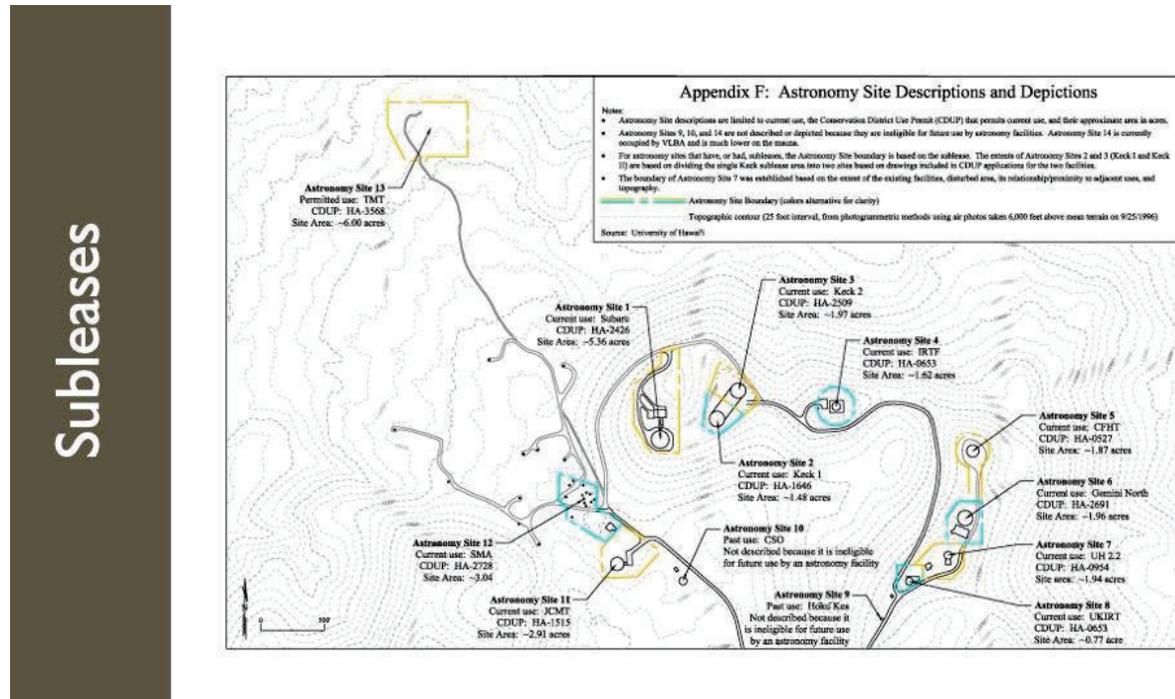


Figure 2. Observatory Subleases

At little monetary cost to the State and with minimal development risk, UH is recognized as one of the Nation's leading astronomical research institutions and, globally, as the center of excellence for astronomical research. This recognition contributes significantly to the State's efforts to expand its high-technology sector. The annual economic impact of astronomy in the State in 2019 was \$220.95 million (\$261.33 million in 2022 dollars (CPI-U)), with the most significant impacts found on Hawai'i Island and Honolulu, \$101.68 million (\$120.26 million in 2022 dollars (CPI-U adjusted)) and \$86.96 million (\$102.85 million in 2022 dollars (CPI-U adjusted)), respectively. Additional benefits accrue to the State and local communities through opportunities in scientific, professional, technical, and administrative employment within the local community.

A. UH Plan Updates and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

In preparation for seeking a new land authorization (e.g., a new general lease from the BLNR beyond 2033), UH updated the "Mauna Kea Science Reserve Master Plan," adopted by the UH Board of Regents (BOR) in 2000, and the "Mauna Kea Comprehensive Management Plan," adopted by the BLNR in 2009 (collectively, "Plans"). The effort to update the Plans involved significant community and stakeholder

input over multiple years from the Maunakea Management Board, Kahu Kū Mauna, ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center, existing Maunakea Observatories, and other community stakeholders, regarding, among other things, the restructuring of governance of and stewardship of Maunakea. This effort included multiple permitted interaction groups of the Board of Regents, as well. UH’s new master plan, E O Nā Leo: Listen to the Voices, was adopted by the Board of Regents in January 2022, and the updated Mauna Kea Comprehensive Management Plan, Comprehensive Management Plan 2022 Supplement, was approved by the BLNR in July 2022. Among other things, the Plans integrate management actions that strive for a renewed balance across the cultural, natural, educational, and recreational values that Maunakea provides to the State. The Plans also address UH’s decommissioning commitments and the replacement of the UH Hilo’s educational telescope from the summit to the mid-level facilities at Halepōhaku.

Knowing that investment on the part of observatory partners (foreign and the United States government agencies, universities, and corporate entities) would be critical for the sustainability of astronomy on Maunakea, as early as 2018, UH had begun preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for UH’s proposed new land authorization to continue astronomy on Maunakea beyond 2033. That work ended with the passage of Act 255 (2022).

Act 255 established the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKSOA), which, as of July 1, 2023, assumed management responsibilities for the former UH-managed lands on Maunakea. MKSOA is comprised of eleven voting Board members and one non-voting ex officio member (UH Hilo Chancellor). Act 255 set a five-year transition period ending July 1, 2028. During the transition period, UH and MKSOA will “jointly manage” Maunakea while MKSOA is formally organized and prepares to assume all legal and operational responsibilities currently under UH management (e.g., UH’s two general leases, grant of easement, and all conservation district Use Permits (CDUPs) held by UH for third-party non-UH astronomy facilities and buildings, physical assets, vendor contracts, liabilities, etc.). Act 255 also granted MKSOA specific land disposition responsibilities currently under the jurisdiction of the BLNR and appropriated \$14M for MKSOA start-up.

Act 255 prohibits new leases on Maunakea until after the transition period ends and leases are taken over by MKSOA. Given questions arising from Act 255 about MKSOA’s authority and the change of control from BLNR to MKSOA, all UH work on the EIS, new land authorizations from BLNR, and new real property sub-agreements with Maunakea observatories have ceased. UH has communicated to MKSOA its recommendation that MKSOA commence an EIS or continue the EIS work already completed by UH as soon as possible.

As referenced in Act 255, the decommissioning and removal of two astronomy facilities by UH was underway at the time the Legislature passed the Act: (1) Caltech Submillimeter Observatory (CSO), a private facility, and 2) UH Hilo’s Hōkū Ke’a teaching telescope, with both projects completed in FY24.

B. New Maunakea Observatory (MKO) Agreements

In FY21, UH initiated discussions with MKO Directors regarding new agreements for the period after 2033, when their current subleases terminate. Those discussions continued into FY22 and covered various terms, including rent, stewardship fees, community benefits, shared use and maintenance costs, and property or use rights. The goal of these negotiations was to have an agreed-upon set of terms by the end of 2022 —the process for developing these new agreements included community discussions.

After the passage of Act 255, in addition to stopping UH's work on a new general lease from BLNR, UH has also halted all of its work on new MKO subleases. Act 255 states that the MKSOA "shall develop a management plan," and that the management plan shall, among other things, "[p]repare for and establish the framework, criteria, and procedures for any leases and permits." MKSOA has begun preliminary work on a management plan, and UH has recommended that MKSOA begin discussions as soon as possible to advance MKO subleases.

C. Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) Sublease

On September 27, 2017, the BLNR issued its 271-page Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Decision and Order containing 1,070 Findings of Fact and 512 Conclusions of Law, for the CDUP, allowing the construction and operation of TMT. On October 30, 2018, the Hawai'i Supreme Court affirmed the CDUP after various parties appealed. The process for obtaining CDUP approval took approximately seven years from the initial submission of the permit application in 2010, including two contested cases, several judicial appeals, and two Hawai'i Supreme Court decisions. Parties continue to challenge the TMT project.

Unlike the other existing observatory subleases, which provide for nominal rent in exchange for viewing time and sublessee contributions to shared operations, maintenance, and stewardship of Maunakea, the TMT International Observatory (TIO) sublease provides for substantial lease rent payments in addition to these other terms. Pursuant to TIO's sublease, annual lease rent started at \$300,000. The lease rent schedule is phased, with increases based on construction activity adjusted for CPI. Full annual lease rent payments of \$1,080,000 a year began in FY 2025, despite cessation of all construction activities on Maunakea. In FY25, TMT paid \$1,417,704.16 in lease rent and, to date, TIO has paid UH \$6,431,562.58 in rent, all of which has supported the stewardship and care of Maunakea. These payments are deposited into the Mauna Kea Lands Management Special Fund as the legislature directed in 2009 Hawai'i Session Laws Act 132 (codified at HRS § 304A-2170)¹.

TIO is currently awaiting National Science Foundation (NSF) funding to commence with construction. NSF initiated a Section 106 consultation process as part of its review of TIO's funding application. This process, conducted by NSF, involved months of pre-consultation meetings with the community, followed by three public meetings on Hawai'i Island in 2022. NSF is still reviewing comments submitted during the public comment period. NSF has not set a date for issuing its report nor for restarting the Section 106 process.

At their September 9, 2025, MKSOA Board meeting, TMT was invited to provide an update on the status of their project and publicly stated their openness to relocating it to the former CSO site, which was

¹ On July 28, 2025, TIO requested a three-month deferral of rent payments from UH due to the lack of sustained, access to the TMT project site, which has prevented TIO from quiet enjoyment of the subleased property. On October 30, 2025, in recognition of TIO's financial challenges and Governor Green's and Congressional Delegation guidance, UH agreed to allow additional time for Sublease rent payments until sustained, continual project site access is achieved, and it was agreed that UH and TIO will continue discussions and negotiations regarding the specific details, as permitted under the terms of the Sublease. UH also agreed with TIO that THINK Fund payments, intended to support community benefits during construction, are not required at this time, given TIO's continued lack of access to the site. To date, TIO has contributed \$5.5 million dollars to the THINK Fund and at least \$25,000 to programs that assist at-risk youth, specifically focusing on the children of incarcerated parents.

decommissioned in 2024. In a letter dated October 2, 2025, from TIO Board Chair Henry Yang and Co-Chair Saku Tsuneta to UH President Wendy Hensel and Board of Regent Chair Gabe Lee, TIO requested information and clarification on ***“regarding the procedures, anticipated timing, and likely duration, including administrative and legal processes, required for TIO to pursue the necessary permits and lease on a decommissioned site.”*** On October 24, 2025, Governor Green and members of Hawai‘i’s Congressional Delegation (“CODEL”) responded that ***“The Governor and appropriate officials in his Administration will work with the Board of the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKSOA) and the University of Hawai‘i to promptly establish a clear and transparent procedure for obtaining the necessary permits associated with a decommissioned site.”*** This request and the Governor’s response come in the context of TIO conducting its due diligence on an offer by Spain for financial support to relocate to La Palma and the current federal decision-making regarding funding to build TMT in Hawai‘i.

UH, MKSOA, DLNR, and the AG have held joint and independent meetings to discuss and clarify current processes for TMT relocating to a new site. MKSOA has taken the lead on outlining the process TMT would follow, which is still being developed at the time of this writing.

II. Administrative Rules

Hawai‘i Administrative Rules Chapter 20-26, “Public and Commercial Activities on Mauna Kea Lands,” was adopted by the BOR on November 6, 2019, and approved by Governor David Ige on January 13, 2020 (MK Rules). UH has no pending administrative rule amendments related to Maunakea at this time. BOR’s adoption of the administrative rules is being challenged by opponents in *Flores-Case ‘Ohana v. University of Haw.*, No. SCRQ-22-0000118.

Act 255 repeals all UH plans and the MK Rules after the transition period and grants MKSOA the authority to develop its own plans and administrative rules. There have been discussions that MKSOA may adopt UH’s MK Rules until it promulgates a new set of rules.

III. Income and Expenditures of the Mauna Kea Lands Management Special Fund (HRS § 304A-2170)

During FY25, \$247,396 in fees were collected from commercial tour operators, \$1,000 in fees collected from film permit applicants, \$1,417,704.16 in lease fee payments from TMT, \$1,302,609.21 carryover from FY 2024, and \$65,278.22 in interest for a total of \$3,033,988. A total of \$1,069,731.87 was used to help defray the cost of operating the Maunakea Ranger program, VIS, and road, facility, and infrastructure maintenance.

Total payments of \$331,296.43 were made to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) in FY25, as follows: \$9,434.80 (FY24 4th Quarter payment) and \$321,861.63 (total of 1st through 3rd Quarter payments). A payment of \$11,258.40 for the 4th Quarter 2025 was paid to OHA following the start of FY26.

HRS § 304A-1905 requires reporting in this annual report of “income and expenditures of the Mauna Kea Lands Management Special Fund established in HRS § 304A-2170.” However, it is important to note that the Mauna Kea Lands Management Special Fund accounts for only a fraction of the revenue required to cover UH’s overall direct costs for the management and stewardship of Mauna Kea. In FY25, the Mauna Kea Lands Management Special Fund covered approximately 62% of UH’s direct management costs. A combination of UH tuition, fees, and research funds covered the remaining 38%. In addition to management expenses as part of its stewardship responsibilities, UH has funded between

\$500,000 and \$1.2M annually to cover operations, planning, permitting, and legal expenses needed to ensure compliance with conservation district rules and lease requirements.

Act 255 repeals the Mauna Kea lands management special fund on July 1, 2028, with any remaining balance being transferred to the new Mauna Kea management special fund established thereunder. UH's direct costs for management, stewardship, planning, permitting, litigation, and compliance will need to be paid for by MKSOA through other funding sources.

A. Financial Stability Planning

The total impact of reductions in federal support for UH research on our stewardship operations is still emerging, but funding from UH's Research and Training Revolving Fund (RTRF) that CMS has received in years past has already ceased. For FY26, it is forecast that without replacement funding, CMS will finish with a deficit of ~\$62,000 for the period, with significantly larger deficits forecast for FYs 27 (~\$1.3M) and 28 (~\$2.6M). UH and MKSOA share a mutual interest in ensuring reductions in our RTRF do not impact current services provided by CMS, so, consistent with Part III Section 10 of Act 255, calling for equitable funding during the transition period, UH staff and MKSOA staff are in discussions on options to equitably share operational costs for the remainder of the transition period. The MKSOA Board, via Executive Director DeFries reported at the December 2025 meeting that this item would be considered at their January 2026 meeting.

In addition, as part of their operating agreements with UH, the Maunakea Observatories ("MKOs") pay for services that support their operations, which also provide a public benefit. These include Visitor Information Station operations, safety, road maintenance, road repair and snow removal that provide access to the summit. While UH does not rely on federal funds directly for these services, several of the observatories that receive services from UH do. Federal funding varies from observatory to observatory: some receive a large portion of their budget from the federal government, while others depend on no federal funds at all. The proposed federal budget cuts by the current administration have created uncertainty amongst some observatories about whether they will be able to meet their financial obligations to fund these critical support services. To address these uncertainties, UH has been working closely with all observatories to develop potential scenarios that would allow UH to continue providing the required services while adjusting to their financial capabilities.

HRS Section 195H-6(c) requires that MKSOA adopt a financial plan that strives for financial self-sustainability after the sixth year following the transition period (by 2036). The fewer the number of observatories, the greater the financial burden for each observatory. UH will continue to work with MKOs and MKSOA to address the financial sustainability of astronomy on Maunakea, given that Act 255 established this as a matter of statewide policy.

IV. Maunakea Lands Activities and Other Activities

A. Commercial Tour Operations

Nine commercial tour operator permits were transferred from the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to UH in 2005. Two operators have gone out of business, and seven operator permits remain active. During the pandemic, only six were operating; the seventh was planned to restart in 2022, but has not yet done so. That permittee continues to pay their monthly minimum payment to keep their permit active.

Each commercial tour operator (CTO) is charged a \$6.00/tour passenger fee, which is submitted to the Center for Maunakea Stewardship (CMS) (formerly the Office of Maunakea Management (OMKM)) every month. All fees are deposited into the Mauna Kea Lands Management Special Fund and are used to cover management and stewardship activities on Maunakea. Twenty percent of the fees collected are set aside for payment to OHA. In FY25, a total of \$247,396 was collected from commercial tour operators.

In August 2025, the Board of Regents (“BOR”) approved an increase in commercial tour operator fees to \$20/tour passenger to more fairly cover stewardship costs associated with commercial operations. Those fees took effect in November 2025. The full impact of this increase in revenues received from the CTOs will not be known until FY27, but CMS projects a threefold increase.

B. Decommissioning

Pursuant to the CDUP for the TMT project, the BLNR imposed special conditions regarding the decommissioning of telescopes on Maunakea, including the following:

Special Condition 10. The University will decommission three telescopes permanently, as soon as reasonably possible, and no new observatories will be constructed on those sites. This commitment will be legally binding on the University and shall be included in any lease renewal or extension proposed by the University for Mauna Kea.

Special Condition 11. Notwithstanding any lease renewal or extension, consistent with the Decommissioning Plan, at least two additional facilities will be permanently decommissioned by December 31, 2033, including the Very Long Baseline Array antenna and at least one additional observatory.

On November 6, 2019, the BOR adopted Resolution 19-03, “Resolution to Act on Items Relating to Maunakea Management” (later revised in part by BOR Reso. 21-02) (BOR Reso. 19-03). Accordingly, a schedule to decommission CSO and Hōkū Ke‘a by December 31, 2021, was presented to the BOR. This presentation, including the schedule, is available at [02.20.20 BOR Decom Presentation](#). This schedule was updated due to COVID-19 and permitting delays with the new projected timelines discussed below.

BOR Reso. 19-03 established a December 30, 2025, deadline to determine which three additional telescopes will be decommissioned in compliance with existing or future permits or governmental approvals. UH began discussions with sublessees to prepare a decision-making framework for public comment and review as part of the Plans update process. However, these discussions between UH and sublessees stopped with the passage of Act 255, which will transfer the CDUP for TMT to MKSOA in 2028 after the transition period. UH Plans will also no longer be applicable after the transition period, during which UH committed to nine (9) operating astronomy facilities on Maunakea after decommissioning conditions had been met. It is important to note that subleases are co-terminus with the MKSR General Lease, which expires in 2033. The subleases and MKSR General Lease all provide provisions for the removal or transfer of ownership of astronomy facilities on Maunakea on or before 2033.

As reported in UH’s 2025 Annual Report to the Legislature, in June 2024, UH announced the completion of the Hōkū Ke‘a decommissioning [UH News re HK Decommissioning](#).



Figure 3. Hōkū Ke'a Decommissioning: Before and After

In July 2024, UH announced the completion of the CSO decommissioning [UH News re CSO Decommissioning](#).



Figure 4. CSO Decommissioning: Before and After

In addition to CSO and Hōkū Ke'a, finding of fact 171 of the TMT CDUP issued for TMT identified the United Kingdom Infrared Telescope (UKIRT) for decommissioning by the time the TMT project becomes operational, and the BLNR identified the Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA) for decommissioning in Special Condition 11 of the same CDUP. Act 255 contemplates the transfer of all CDUPs issued to UH for astronomy facilities owned by third parties, like TMT, to MKSOA. Act 255 also directs MKSOA to develop a framework for future astronomy development on Maunakea, as codified under HRS § 195H-6:

- (d) The authority shall be responsible for the establishment of a framework for astronomy-related development on Mauna Kea. The framework may include: (1) Limitations on the number of observatories and astronomy-related facilities, or an astronomy facility footprint limitation; (2) Prioritizing the reuse of footprints of observatories that are scheduled for decommissioning, or have been decommissioned, as sites for facilities or improvements over the use of undeveloped lands for such purposes; and (3) A set of principles for returning the lands used for astronomy research to their natural state whenever observatories are decommissioned or no longer have research or educational value.

Consequently, MKSOA will be determining the future status of these permit conditions and future decommissioning requirements.

C. Stewardship

The 2020 CMP Update provided a status update on all 103 management actions contained in the plan. In FY24, CMS updated the status of the 103 action items, of which 16 are now deemed completed, 13 are deemed completed/ongoing, and 74 are classified as ongoing². There is no change to this status update for FY25.

In accordance with the CMP, UH's resource management team carried out management actions in FY2025. Key accomplishments included:

- Cultural site monitoring: Annual surveys conducted at 91 of the 263 cultural sites.
- Arthropod monitoring: Surveys completed at 111 sites.
- Invasive plant removal: 11,740 pounds removed through volunteer programs (engaging 234 community members) and staff efforts.
- Vehicle inspections: 75 inspections performed to prevent invasive species introduction. One load was rejected due to termites, while three were remediated (washed and treated) and subsequently approved.
- Facility inspections: Annual reviews of base yard facilities for weekly delivery companies (e.g., water delivery and portable toilet services) as well as observatories.



Figure 5. Restoration Volunteers Receiving Training

A major highlight of UH's resource management team's stewardship efforts in FY25 was the out planting of 698 seedlings across four acres of land, including the 2.2-acre 'Āhinahina (SILVERSWORD) enclosure in partnership with the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW).

Protecting Maunakea from invasive insects remains a critical priority. In FY25, no new invasive arthropods were detected within UH-managed facilities, and the team continued targeted treatments for the single ant species already present, *Cardiocondyla kagutsuchi*.

² Completed means the management action is done; completed/ongoing means the management action required a discrete task to be done, which has been completed but requires an ongoing element which is never completed; and ongoing means this is a management action that never ceases.

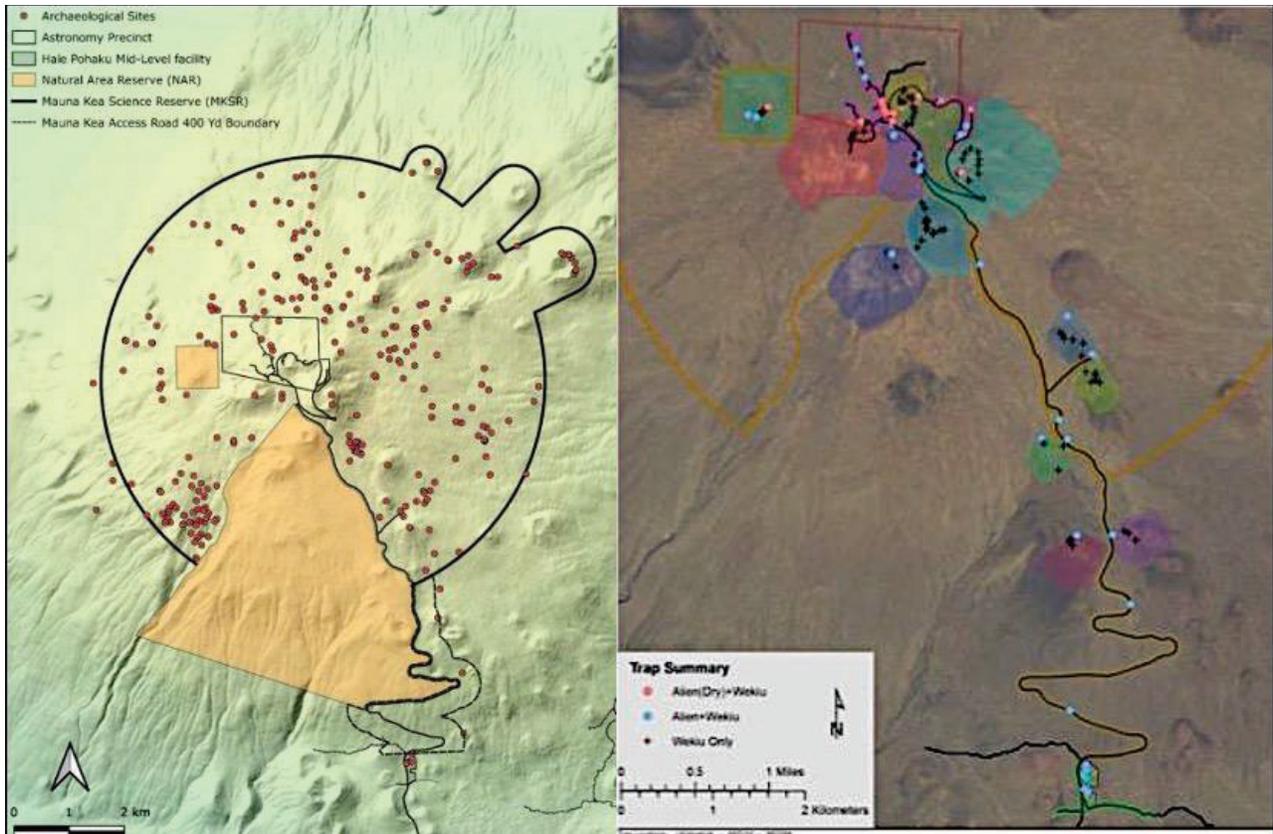


Figure 6. Historic (left) and Arthropod (right) Survey sites.



Figure 7. Resource Management Team Conducting Annual Arthropod and Historic Site Survey.

D. Public and Commercial Access

Our Rangers and VIS staff provide important education and information to residents and visitors on how to safely and respectfully experience Maunakea. In FY25, approximately 130,705 vehicles drove to the Visitor Information Station. Of those, approximately 35,241 visitor vehicles (i.e., non-employee, non-contractor, non-commercial) drove to the summit with an estimated 99,383 passengers. In addition, our

Rangers monitored approximately 4,917 hikers who crossed UH-managed lands to reach DLNR lands, then crossed back onto UH managed lands to reach the summit. All vehicles going to the summit and all hikers receive a safety briefing before ascending to educate them about altitude sickness, safe 4WD driving, emergency contacts, sensitive cultural sites, and visiting respectfully. In FY25, there were 3,563 commercial tour operator trips to the summit with 37,555 visitors. Commercial tour operators and our Rangers together provide these safety briefings.

Our administrative rules allow UH to close the summit road due to natural disasters, inclement weather, and/or other emergency situations that make going to the summit unsafe. In FY25, the Rangers had to implement partial-day closures on 66 days and full-day closures on another 6 days.

A key element of our safety prevention program involves brake checks by our Rangers upon descent for all visitor vehicles. Vehicles with temperatures above 300 degrees are advised to stop at the VIS to cool before continuing their descent. In FY25, 13% of visitor vehicles were identified as having heated brakes, and of those, 20% had temperatures exceeding 500 degrees.



Figure 8. Sunset Viewing Traffic

E. Planning and Permitting

CMS is responsible for ensuring that all activities on the mauna comply with existing land use agreements, entitlement permits, applicable statutes, UH administrative rules, and the BLNR-approved CMP.

UH processed ten (10) projects in FY25 proposed by either an observatory or UH itself. All underwent review from our UH advisory groups and by MKSOA for those projects that had been agreed upon for review and approval. All projects were approved by DLNR (OCCL) and are either completed, underway, or awaiting start.

In addition to the commercial tour permits, our administrative rules allow UH to issue film, research, and special use permits. There were twenty (6) film permit applications processed in FY25; one (1) was withdrawn. Two (2) research permits were reviewed and approved, and two (2) special use permit applications were submitted and approved.

F. Fuel Underground Storage Tank Removal and Replacement

As per HAR 11-280.1.21 (Upgrading UST Systems): No later than 07/15/2028, all tanks and piping installed before 08/09/2013 must be provided with secondary containment that meets the requirements of section 11-280.1.24.

To comply with this new regulation, CMS/MKSS opted for the removal of the three existing single wall fiber glass fuel storage tanks (12,000 gal diesel; 4,000 gal gasoline; 2,000 gal gasoline) the existing buried distribution lines and the dispensing pumps and replace them with two 3,000 gal double walled metal tanks with fuel dispensing systems integrated into them (one for gas one for diesel). Per OCCL, the removal of the tanks and buried lines requires an Environmental Assessment (EA). Sustainable Resources Group International Inc (SRGII) was contracted to perform the EA and Archaeological Monitoring Plan (AMP), and to obtain the CDUA/CDUP for the project.



Figure 9. Above Ground Replacement Tanks

After consultation with Hawaiian cultural practitioners, UH's advisory groups, and approvals by the Maunakea Management and MKSOA boards, the Draft EA and Findings of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were published for public comment on December 8, 2025. The EA is anticipated to be completed in the summer of 2026. The development of the specifications, contract, and selection of a contractor to execute the project are anticipated to take place in the second half of 2026, with project start targeted for the first calendar quarter of 2027. The estimated cost of the project in 2024 is \$1,200,000, but this figure is anticipated to increase due to recent international trade tariffs on imported goods.

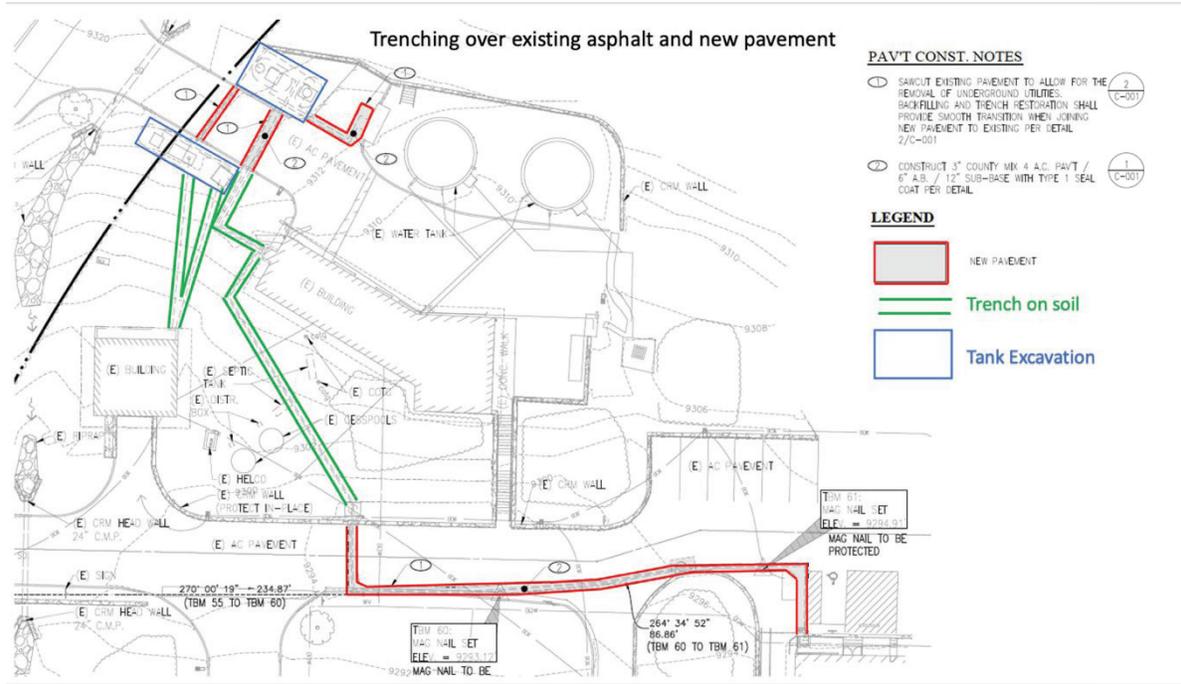


Figure 10. UST Replacement - Project Scope

G. Education and Outreach

Under the guidance of CMS’s new Education and Outreach Coordinator, the updated Education program was launched with three primary areas of focus: Exploration, Conservation, and Community. Central to the initiative is building collaborative partnerships with UH’s programs, the State of Hawai’i Department of Education (DOE), and other community organizations.

An important first step, and very well received by staff, has been the introduction of twice-monthly staff development sessions that emphasize natural and cultural resource education and training in cultural protocols.

The team is also collaborating with Visitor Information Station (VIS) staff to create a VIS-led program to deepen the public’s understanding of Maunakea’s resources and Hawaiian culture. This program is scheduled for official rollout in FY 2026.

In FY2025, the Education & Outreach program welcomed 32 groups, engaging more than 685 participants for Mālama ‘Āina weed pull events from a wide range of classes, including UH Hilo’s *Kuleana and Community* course, Hawaiian Studies classes, Lanakila Learning Center, Kipuka, UH Mānoa’s Master of Education program, as well as Hawai’i Island high schools and charter schools.

CMS also partnered with several local organizations for Mālama ‘Āina weed-pull events, including the Hawai’i Island Health Center, Teach America, Colorado Peak Charter School, the State of Hawai’i Summer Youth Employment Program, and others.

Beyond these efforts, CMS actively participated in community outreach programs, including the Hawai’i Career Expo, STARS program, and the Hawai’i Conservation Conference, and delivered numerous presentations to classes across the island.

In FY2025, CMS unveiled a new interactive exhibit at the Visitor Information Station, offering visitors an up-close look at both native and invasive insects found on Maunakea. The display also features tactile opportunities to explore the remarkable Maunakea Ko’i (Adze).

CMS continues to enhance and update educational signage, ensuring the protection of Maunakea’s unique natural resources while promoting visitor safety.

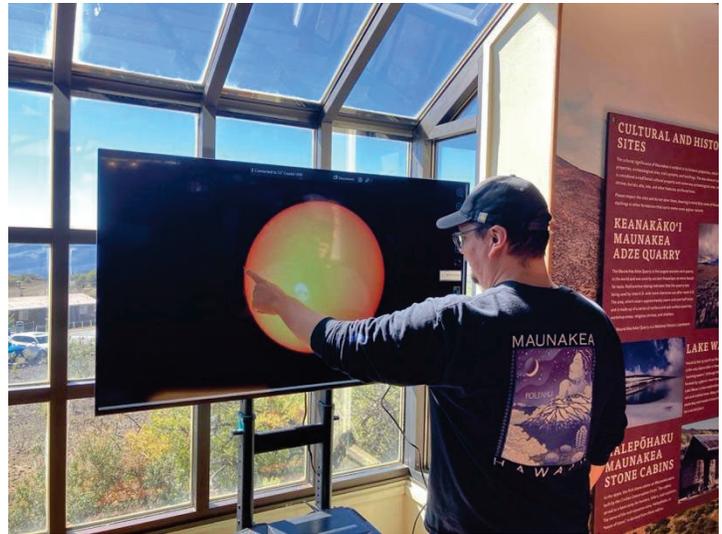


Figure 11. Interactive Solar Display and Updated Interpretive Signage at the VIS



Figure 12. Outreach Team Engaging Students at Hilo Career Expo

H. Emergency and Disaster Response

In our 2025 annual report to the legislature, UH provided an initial report on the impact of Hurricane Hone, which passed through the state on August 24-25, 2024, just after the conclusion of FY24. The

unique aspect of the hurricane was the intensity of its force at the summit, which occurred over a short period. Wind speeds exceeded 100 mph at the summit during the height of the storm, and 10 inches of rain fell in 24 hours. Runoff damage to the summit access road, the utility corridor, and certain observatory sites was significant, requiring a sustained repair effort. Upon completion of the repairs, it was determined that our Utilities team spent over 380 hours completing repair work on the access road and utility corridor, requiring over 320 equipment hours. While this repair work was completed with internal resources, it is estimated that the effort cost approximately \$70,000, which was paid for by UH and the Maunakea Observatories (“MKOs”), ensuring safe access to the summit for the public and employees.



Figure 13. Hurricane Hone Damage.

I. MKSOA Transition

In FY24, MKSOA completed the recruitment and hiring of its core management team. UH, through the CMS, has provided its new team with comprehensive reviews covering all UH plans, policies, leases, finances, operations, and other matters for which MKSOA assumes responsibility in July 2028. The purpose of these reviews was to educate the MKSOA management team on the basic management functions they will assume responsibility for, providing a basis for developing their management plans, policies, administrative rules, and programs. Before their hiring, CMS provided similar reviews for the MKSOA Board. Reviews for MKSOA management and the board are ongoing and scheduled as needed, as issues arise that require education and clarification.

To facilitate and ensure open, ongoing communication with the MKSOA in support of our joint management responsibilities, CMS proposed and initiated the creation of a joint management committee (JMC) comprising the senior MKSOA and CMS management teams. The JMC meets bi-weekly

to discuss and decide on a variety of strategic and operational matters. The CMS Executive Director and the MKSOA Executive Director maintain regular communication to discuss strategy and coordinate on strategic issues. Additionally, CMS requested that MKSOA management representatives attend CMS managers, MKO Directors, and CMS advisory group meetings to provide updates on their transition progress so that these groups can hear and interact directly with MKSOA management on the work they are engaged in. Finally, the CMS Executive Director provides regular operational updates to the MKSOA board at their monthly board meetings. This is intended to keep the MKSOA board and management apprised of current issues and general matters UH is addressing on a day-to-day basis, which are likely to recur when MKSOA assumes management responsibility in July 2028.

In FY24, CMS compiled a comprehensive inventory of all assets and liabilities to be transferred from UH to the MKSOA under Section 9 of Act 255. A substantial portion of these items was identified and listed in a letter from CMS to the BLNR chair and MKSOA chair on August 1, 2023. This letter is posted by the DLNR Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands on its Maunakea Management website, at [CMS Letter to BLNR](#).

In FY24, MKSOA established the Long-term Asset Transfer Working Group (TWG), to develop a plan for the transfer of assets and liabilities. Members of the TWG include CMS, UH BOR, DLNR, MKSOA management, MKSOA consultants, and our respective legal counsel. MKSOA Board member (and BOR representative) Ben Kudo serves as the TWG Chair, joined by fellow board member Paul Horner. The work of the TWG was delayed until MKSOA hired their attorney consultant, which they finalized in November 2024. The TWG completed its exhaustive review of the inventory in October 2025, and a draft of an asset transfer plan is expected to be ready for review in the first calendar quarter of 2026.

In support of MKSOA's requirements to develop a management plan per Act 255 and to support the transition in general, CMS developed a draft transition plan, which was provided to the MKSOA management team in June 2024. That plan identified the categories of work and major tasks required in developing their management plan, as well as the larger tasks required to effectuate the transition. The draft plan did not identify a timeline for the work, as MKSOA staff were still in the process of hiring their planning consultant, who will be engaged to establish their own plan. MKSOA has since hired a consultant to assist them with their transition plan. We have had, and continue to have, ongoing joint planning discussions informed by UH's experience and CMS's draft plan to support MKSOA's transition planning.

In October 2024, MKSOA issued an RFP for a planning consultant, with Kua O Wākea (KOW), a multidisciplinary team led by SSFM International, selected as the final choice in the Summer of 2025. UH has supported the start-up of KOW by conducting comprehensive informational briefings for the team on September 8, 9, and 24, 2025, and responding to ongoing information requests on all aspects of our plans, policies, operations, processes, and financials.

Lastly, in FY25, UH continued to provide support to MKSOA, which was now a new corporate body. Support has included logistical coordination for MKSOA board meetings, which now meet at the Institute for Astronomy (IFA) offices in Hilo; staff training; minor financial and administrative support; office space for MKSOA at IFA and Hale Pōhaku; and use of our four-wheel-drive fleet when they need to access the mauna.

J. 2026 Legislation

When Act 255 was enacted the Legislature anticipated that amendments would be required to address issues the law did not consider:

§ -1 Findings and purpose

....It is expected that amendments and additions will need to be made in future legislative sessions to ensure a mutually beneficial balance is always maintained for Mauna Kea and the people of Hawaii.

MKSOA has prepared draft legislation to introduce in 2026, intended to address several of these issues ([MKSOA Draft Legislation](#)). In particular, MKSOA seeks to: 1) hold title to the lands currently managed by UH in fee (as opposed to a lease from BLNR); 2) transfer UH-held Conservation District Use Permits to individual MKOs through the act of law; and 3) clarify their jurisdiction for regulating conservation district uses on the lands they will manage. Permitted Interaction Groups established by the BOR and MKSOA met on November 7, 2025, to discuss the draft legislation as well as other priority items related to the transition of management from UH to MKSOA. UH was invited to provide input on the legislation and our priority items and did so in a November 20, 2025, response to MKSOA ([Nov 20 Correspondence from UH](#)).

Highlighted in our response is UH's concern about the current status of new lease negotiations for ongoing astronomy operations on Maunakea, consistent with Act 255, which declares astronomy on Maunakea a policy of the State (and the county, as the Mayor has repeatedly stated). The absence of certainty of new leases has already resulted in disinvestment by observatories and is thus an immediate concern. The 2033 termination date of UH's General Lease and the MKO subleases requires MKO decommissioning to commence in 2028 at the latest if there is no future presence on Maunakea. Moreover, financial self-sustainability for MKSOA, as required by legislation, is highly dependent on lease rent payments to be agreed upon in new lease terms. Negotiation will be a complicated and lengthy process due to the federal and international composition of the respective ownership groups, and the basic need to determine how many observatories will be allowed going forward, as that sets the baseline for how many observatories MKSOA costs are spread across.

In their November 30, 2025, response, MKSOA indicated that their priority is to complete their management plan and work on building trust with the community, both of which they believe are critical before discussions can occur on future leases ([Nov 30 MKSOA Response to UHS Leadership](#)). Additional discussions are being planned between UH and MKSOA to work collaboratively to resolve these differences in priorities.